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Interview with Doyle Carroll

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Doyle Carroll

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ORAL HISTORY OF DR. DOYLE CARROLL

ONE-ROOM SCHOOLTEACHER

Ardis: I am interviewing Dr. Doyle Carroll who presently serves as minister of the United Methodist Churches in Delphos and Glasco, Kansas. Dr. Carroll, I understand you taught in the Pleasant Prairie School in Haskell County. Would you share information about yourself, your education, and what factor lead you to teach in a rural community?

Dr. Carroll: Yes. I did teach in 1962-64 in Haskell County. I taught previously in the Dodge City Schools, the sixth grade primarily with the athletic program and working with the special and this would be the top-side of the spectrum of capabilities. Two years prior to that, I had been part of a two-room school in Rice County. I was a young teacher, eighteen years old, teaching with a lady in her sixties, which was rather unique. She taught me much about teaching in a small school. I went from the two-room school in Rice County to Dodge City for professional reasons. The reason I went from Dodge City to Pleasant Prairie was the life style. Many would see that as a regression professionally. For one

thing, we had three children and the opportunity to live in the country was attractive. The other aspect was that this school district could offer a real strong salary compensation and provide a house. That removed house payments and gave an increase in salary. Leslie Alexander, the director of the school board at that time, was a personal friend. We had developed a friendship between our families over the years which was church related. He came to Dodge City one day and just off-handedly asked why I didn't come out and teach school for them. Well, I told him that I might, but first I would need an offer for a job. It wasn't very many months until I received a phone call and he asked me for an interview. I just couldn't find any reason to say no. Dodge City was a good system, highly recognized in the state, the salary schedule was not necessarily a captive one, but competitive. I remember Bill Engler was on the board, Cliff Hull, and Leslie Alexander. It was a three-man board. We had a good conversation, I'm a farm boy at heart, and I guess they caught me at a weak moment and I said yes.

Ardis: That is interesting. I did not know that my father-in-law had been involved with the school. I don't remember anyone ever mentioning that fact. Let us direct our

thoughts to the curriculum at the Pleasant Prairie School.
What were the grades at the school?

Dr. Carroll: The first year, I obtained permission from them to start kindergarten. Come January, we had kindergarten through the 8th grade. As I remember, we had students in each grade. The 5th and 8th grade had only one student. That first year, there was an enrollment of twenty-one and then three more came in for kindergarten and one of them was my oldest son. That brought the enrollment up to twenty-four. That year we graduated one, Milton Alexander, and Wanda Jean Alexander was the lone 5th grader. The kindergarten next year had two, so we went up in enrollment. This was a real strong school at the time, averaging between twenty-four and twenty-five students in a one-room school. You had much opportunity there.

Ardis: What were the subjects that you taught?

Dr. Carroll: Every basic subject you would find in an elementary school was taught at Pleasant Prairie. Of course, you began each day with reading, writing, and arithmetic. Then you would also have geography, history, science, and health.

Ardis: What about music and physical education?

Dr. Carroll: We were able to attract a pianist, which was my wife. We had our annual programs, such as Christmas, spring programs, and they were always exciting and highly educational situations for the kids. The physical educational program was very limited from the perspective you would find in a larger school system, however, we did take on basketball and used some girls with the boys so we were able to come up with five players for two teams. I remember going over to the Valley School and to another school district east across the highway about twenty miles for various activities.

Ardis: Colusa? There was a school east of the highway about twenty miles by that name.

Dr. Carroll: A Mennonite community?

Ardis: Yes, a Mennonite community and I recall my husband mentioning at various times about the activities that Pleasant Prairie had with Colusa.

Dr. Carroll: Spelling bees were real strong activities for the county.

We also had county-wide track meets.

Ardis: Was this just with the country schools?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, this was just the country schools. I remember Golda Hemker was the county school superintendent. The interest in developing organized sports was a very positive thing I tried to bring into the rural schools. Outside, we played baseball and had no problem getting that organized because all of the kids played. We played baseball, black man, kick-the-can, hide-and-seek, organized basketball, but no football. However, we did have track with relays, dashes, and other events.

Ardis: I do not recall hearing anyone mention the track meets. That is interesting.

Dr. Carroll: The county track meet was a positive experience with the kids.

Ardis: What was the length of the school year?

Dr. Carroll: I went from an eight month year to a nine month school year while I was teaching at Pleasant Prairie. I believe that was established by the law that year, although each

district prior to that had the option of an eight or nine month year. I remember the school day was from 8:30 to 3:30 or 3:45. Of course, we all carried our lunches.

Ardis: Yes, I have heard about the famous "bean" sandwiches my mother-in-law made!

Dr. Carroll: Oh yes, I remember tuna fish sandwiches until I didn't think I could ever look a fish in the mouth again!

Ardis: So, there was no hot lunch program at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: No, no hot lunch program at this school. We did get the hot lunch program instituted and going in the two-room school in Rice County, which was a good move, but many regulations went into that program. I don't think they in the Pleasant Prairie community had that much motivation when they had so many good cooks at home to pack school lunches!

Ardis: How much time was scheduled for lunch?

Dr. Carroll: We would all eat at a designated time and have lunch and recess together. Recess was very important. We

would have a fifteen minute recess in the morning and a fifteen minute recess in the afternoon and a full hour for lunch.

Ardis: Was that fifteen minutes for all the grades?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, that was just as important to the older ones as the younger ones. The kindergarten and first graders had their rugs and they took naps right after lunch.

Ardis: Was that successful?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, I think so. They recognized they were limited in their energy.

Ardis: What teaching methods were used? Did you have any special methods you used? What teaching aids were available?

Dr. Carroll: This was one of the exciting things about being a part of this school. There was really no limitations financial. If I remember correctly, the tax levy was between three and four mills. I don't remember what the total budget was, but I am sure we had the lowest per student because of the high enrollment for student expenses of any school

in the state of Kansas, too. When you combine those two things and they did pay a good salary, they still had a real economical education. I never had any problems getting all the supplies I needed. The real limitation was knowing what was available.

Ardis: You mean what was available in the area?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, what was available in the area and getting to where it was or getting it to you. I used many audio-visual films and those had to be rented.

Ardis: Did you go to Garden City to rent the audio-visual materials?

Dr. Carroll: No, they generally came in the mail. You could order them. And as I remember, there was a catalog and you could order from Wichita, Kansas City, and different places. The other equipment needs you might have would require you to order from School Speciality in Salina. I usually did some shopping prior to school getting some extra phonic books, spelling boooks, coloring books, and used these as extra supplemental materials along with the regular curriculum. In the one-room schoolhouse situation

you have students from the average to above average, and in this school, several were above average. I always felt you should not penalize the above average by giving them extra work just because they could handle it. Projects were used as additional incentives by giving them extra credit, but also I had to go to the five-and-dime to get the different resource books and put them in their desks. For example, Terry would finish before Linda. He could work on phonics. But I used many materials that are available to the average John Q citizen to get for their children and as far as I know, probably exposing the same material to three and four year olds that I was using for five and six year olds.

Ardis: I have often wondered how teachers managed without a copying machine. Did you have any type of copying machine? Or did you copy it by hand?

Dr. Carroll: Well, I didn't do much by hand. However, what I had to have was bought and then I tore pages out of the work-books. Emporia testing. I remember that was something that was very good to have. They had a series of tests which could be used for measurement or progress and achievement. There was a gelation based machine that

could be used. I think I tried that "thing" once and it was such a mess, I gave up on that!

Ardis: Were there any special classes or unique educational services offered? Today, we have the special education classes like gifted and learning disabilities, the Chapter One reading and math programs. Were any programs available to the students at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: Not in the one-room school. In the one-room school you tried to give as much tutoring as possible on private individual basis. It was simply amazing how much time you could spend with each individual, but better than that, you could let the older students work with the younger students and by listening and observing, the younger ones learned from the older students. We had our own spelling bees and I would have graded word lists. The first graders would work right along with the eighth graders. You would do many things together.

Ardis: Describe the school library. What was the size of it?

Dr. Carroll: The books available were very limited. As I recall, the encyclopedia set was very old and out-dated. What I did was go to the Garden City Public Library and check

out books by the boxfull for the students. Also, if you needed other books, you could get them through a rental system from the library in Garden City. This allowed us to have a new set of books about once a month in addition to what was in the school library. They were just coming out with a reading program that I thought would be very exciting in which the student would progress at his or her own speed. I don't remember the name of the program, but it looked like a great promise for anyone in school.

Ardis: You mentioned the Emporia tests. Were they tests that everyone took at the beginning and ending of the school year or were they the eighth grade competency tests?

Dr. Carroll: No, they were standardized tests from the school in Emporia. You could take them every nine weeks if I remember correctly. They were to just establish progress, but also an evaluation of performance of content to measure if you were teaching what you needed to be teaching.

Ardis: Did you purchase any new text books while you were at the Pleasant Prairie School? How were the text books decided upon?

Dr. Carroll: I don't remember purchasing additional text books while

at Pleasant Prairie, but I was in a text book selection committee at Dodge City. I had been teaching for four years and was aware of what would work and what would not. I was also working toward a master's degree from Fort Hays University and Adams State and I felt I was keeping up pretty much in that area. As far as I know, the county determined the text books we used. It was a county-wide decision.

Ardis: All the county school used the same text books?

Dr. Carroll: Yes.

Ardis: How would you describe the atmosphere of you educational program at Pleasant Prairie? Would you describe it as strict or loose, cold or warm?

Dr. Carroll: Well, of course, we had to have discipline, but I am not what you would call a real strict disciplinarian. My lead professor in education training taught to always carry a big stick and get your bluff in. As far as discipline is concerned, I do not remember any discipline problems. The kids came from real strong homes. They did have the tendency to be lazy sometimes when a teacher was not as creative as one should be, but you might pull

rank on them and put a little insistence in your voice and in your actions. I think the kids had values in their background and were modeled to be learners when they came to school. I always felt education should be fun. You learn more! The experience of being involved and participating is one way to help keep discipline. Keep the kids involved and keep them participating in something. Idle hands are devil's tools.

Ardis: What were some of the rules at Pleasant Prairie that might be different from rules in our schools today?

Dr. Carroll: There might be one. One rule I had to have was that parents could not take their child out of school for work purposes.

Ardis: Did you have problems with this?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, that was a potential problem because when Dad had a problem on the farm, he is no different than anyone else. Sometimes instead of being creative to respond to the need or pressure, he does what seems to be needed. For example, he will take Moe out of class. After all, there is only one hour left in the school day.

Ardis: My daughter has an orthodontist appointment each month and it is necessary for her to miss several hours of school. Did you have any students that missed for other such reasons?

Dr. Carroll: No. I think attendance was one of the things the kids had great pride in. Perfect attendance. I'm not sure that was something to take such pride in. I'm sure there were kids in school sometimes that shouldn't have been there just to maintain that perfect attendance record. But still, they had pride in it.

Ardis: When you were ill or needed to be absent, did you have a substitute teacher that you could call on to conduct the classes?

Dr. Carroll: I missed one day of school because of sickness in Rice County and I was sicker than a dog! I didn't know what to do or how to get a replacement for myself, so I called the county superintendent and told him I was sick and no way could I teach school that day. He didn't want to teach, but he came out and taught that one day. When he finished that day, he called me and told me that there was no way he was going to teach the next day. So, in the

six years I taught school, I only missed one day. Then there was the time that Milton and I took a trip, thinking this trip would be educational for him and of course, it was. He saw the Mississippi River and the Missouri River, where the Kentucky and Ohio Rivers meet, and the high bridge that was developed by the W.P.A. across the Kentucky River. He also learned about Henry Clay, the great compromiser. Going to Lexington was a very educational trip and a reward to Milton for completing the eighth grade. We had a good time on the trip. In order to go, I had to be gone on a Monday and Tuesday, so Milton's mother, Olive Alexander, was willing to come and teach school or at least babysit. I think that is what she thought about it because you always had your daily plans worked out and the kids knew what their assignments were. The kids need to be highly motivated and they developed that. They have a sense of direction and they just show maturity faster, at least that is the way I feel about a one-room system than in a larger system where a teacher will treat you as one of twenty-five or thirty-two.

Ardis: One thing my husband mentions about attending Pleasant Prairie were the programs. What were some special programs of the school?

Dr. Carroll: As I remember we had a Thanksgiving program, a Christmas program, and an Easter program. Sometimes the Easter program was used cooperatively with the spring program. The biggest one of those was the Christmas program and also the spring program. The spring program was a time of graduation and a big picnic and everybody came together and played ball in the afternoon after graduation and the picnic.

Ardis: You had the graduation ceremony at the Pleasant Prairie School?

Dr. Carroll: Yes.

Ardis: Did they also have a county-wide graduation at Sublette?

Dr. Carroll: No, not that I recall. Perhaps they had that option and elected to not exercise that option. But I am sure I would have remembered going in for the graduation ceremony. The only thing I remember doing with Sublette or Satanta was the County Institute, which would be the week before school started.

Ardis: Explain the County Institute?

Dr. Carroll: As I recall, the County Institute was in Meade. We went there for one or two days and we were introduced to the new text and introduced to the new teachers. They would have some key-note speaker on certain topics. It would get you all pumped up before the school year began.

Ardis: How much time did you spend preparing for the Christmas program and did each child have a part?

Dr. Carroll: Oh yes, in fact, I don't think every teacher did this, but I personally took it as a personal challenge to write a program so each child could play a part that would be a challenge to them and yet be comfortable with it. So you looked at your kids or the community you were in and you would develop a program around those kids. You had your limited players, you knew their personalities and knew where they fit so you just developed the program.

Ardis: Would you describe a typical school day, before and after school?

Dr. Carroll: It was not unusual for me to be at the school by six-thirty or seven o'clock each morning and be there until the news came on at six o'clock each evening. Basically, I was

working on making plans and preparation of the various lessons. As I think back, I told you many things we used were already manufactured or printed up. Black carbon paper became very important to me and if I had three or four students in a class, I would use carbon paper and come up with extra copies by tracing. But to teach in a one-room school and accomplish what needed to be done that day, you had to be thoroughly prepared.

Ardis: I would think you would need to be ready for the unexpected to happen also?

Dr. Carroll: And as far as I'm concerned, to be a teacher you have to maintain a creditability. That means to me when the kids take a test or have a project, you grade it and reinforce it that day with a quick return. I made this commitment to my kids, so if you do it today you will get the results the next day, if not sooner.

Ardis: Were you responsible for the janitorial duties?

Dr. Carroll: All of them! Every once in awhile you could incorporate some kids into that. I didn't like to do that unless the parents arrived late to pick up the kids. If this happened, I didn't feel a bit bad about putting the kids to work by

cleaning the erasers or washing the chalk board.

Ardis: Are teaching ways or habits different today than when you taught at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: Oh, I think so. I think the teacher probably melts more into the society or the culture now, as after you leave the school you are not as highly visible as you were then. I suppose there is still an identity crisis, a professional crisis within the profession of teaching. Now, I do feel like it is a profession. Sometimes culture looks at a teacher as being a second rate citizen. I always felt they should hold their heads with pride and hang their hats without apology.

Ardis: How were teachers expected to conduct themselves in the community? Was there a code of ethics and morals in the communities where you taught?

Dr. Carroll: Oh yes, there were expectations and I don't know that they were ever stated. I never smoked or never drank. There were certain ethical things that I insisted of myself that I think are very important in any given situation, like a one-room case. You do not touch the

student. I do not maintain to much of a familiarity, you need to be a friend. Maybe I took it to the extreme. The little ones want to hold hands, wrap their arms around your leg, but I always played with my kids. We played hide-and-seek, kick-the-can, and ball. I didn't get out there and just supervise to break up a fight. In fact, I don't remember any fights at Pleasant Prairie and I think one of the reasons is that I was out there playing with the kids. I think an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure. I've always thought playground supervision very vital for safety sake and also for the prevention of discipline problems.

Ardis: Were there any extracurricular activities that you were in charge of at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: Extracurricular. We went over and played basketball at those other schools.

Ardis: How did you transport the children to the other communities? Was there a bus?

Dr. Carroll: Oh no, the parents came and provided transportation.

Ardis: Was there a problem of teacher turnover at the Pleasant Prairie School? If so, did you know the cause of it or if no problem, why?

Dr. Carroll: Well, there wasn't a teacher turnover problem because if I remember correctly, my predecessor was there at least eight years. I came for two years and the turnover factor of my leaving was to go on and go into the ministry and more education. The one that followed me was there a year or two at the most and then they closed the school. The other teachers that I knew in other one-room schools had long tenures. They stayed at these schools for years. So the turnover was not as great as one might think.

Ardis: There were no other teachers at Pleasant Prairie at the time you were teaching there?

Dr. Carroll: No.

Ardis: Was there a principal for the school?

Dr. Carroll: No, we had a county superintendent, but no principal. The teacher was the principal, janitor, and doctor.

Ardis: Did you ever need to involve a parent in any discipline?

Dr. Carroll: Well, as I recall I did not have any discipline problems that would require bringing the parents in. In other schools they did have the opportunity to invite the parents to participate in some discipline procedures. The only real problem I recall turned up toward the end of my second year. Some parent felt that their child was not getting the attention deserved in relationship to what maybe another child was receiving. It was very political and it wasn't anything significant or it would have shown up prior to that last day of school. I think it was on last day of school that this came to my attention.

Ardis: Do you think that maybe part of the reason you had few discipline problems might have been due to the fact that you were a male teacher in comparison to a female teacher?

Dr. Carroll: I'm sure that had some factors, yes.

Ardis: Where did you live? You mentioned earlier that one of the drawing factors to this community was a place provided for the teacher to live. Could you describe the teacher's home?

Dr. Carroll: It was a home, probably a modular which was moved in and put on a foundation. It was little. Two bedrooms, very small as I remember, one bath, a small kitchen. As I look back, it was terribly small.

Ardis: I think you are doing a great job of describing it! That is where Clifford and I lived after we were married. Yes, it was very small and you mentioned you had three children?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, three boys. While we were living in the Pleasant Prairie community, our daughter was born. The students thought that was exciting - the teacher having a new baby! Another thing that was exciting was when President Kennedy was shot. My wife heard of this and we didn't dismiss school, we just moved school from the schoolhouse over to the teacher's house and we watched all the happenings of this historical event on television! I suppose schools have their own televisions now. By the way, the teacher's house did have a garage.

Ardis: Right. And did the water run right through when it rained?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, not only when it rained, but also irrigation water. Sometimes when they were irrigating that quarter, the

backyard and the garage would get watered too.

Ardis: Were there blacktop roads?

Dr. Carroll: No, all gravel roads.

Ardis: Do you know when the schoolhouse was built?

Dr. Carroll: I don't recall, but that building had been there a long time.

Ardis: Did the building have running water, indoor toilets, and electricity while you were teaching there?

Dr. Carroll: Yes.

Ardis: Do you know why the school was called Pleasant Prairie?
Do you know does that name have any significance?

Dr. Carroll: No. I always knew it as Pleasant Prairie. Pleasant Prairie goes way back to when I was a kid. Where it comes from, I don't know.

Ardis: What did the interior of the school look like? Can you describe it?

Dr. Carroll: Newly painted. That was one of the first things we did when we got there. My wife and I did the painting of the steps and of the basement floor and I'm trying to think what was in the basement. We played kick ball down there and dodge ball.

Ardis: Was the basement divided?

Dr. Carroll: No division. A nice open area.

Ardis: Did you play games in the basement when the weather was bad outside?

Dr. Carroll: Yes. Hardwood floors upstairs. I used to sweep it with dust compound.

Ardis: Was there a stage at one end?

Dr. Carroll: Yes. There was an office right off the stage. Sometimes there was dust on the stage.

Ardis: Did you have curtains or shades on the east windows?

Dr. Carroll: Shades, as I remember.

Ardis: The west side is where the books were stored and book shelves. Then there are some small rooms when you come up the main stairs, what were they used for?

Dr. Carroll: Well, the one off on the south side is what I used for my office.

Ardis: So you had to come through the main part of the school to get to your room?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, and I don't even remember what I did with the other room, probably used it for storage.

Ardis: Then the small room at the top of the steps, is that where the children put their wraps and lunch pails?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, that is where they put their wraps and lunch pails.

Ardis: While you were teaching at Pleasant Prairie were there any special events or happenings that took place that were peculiar. Do you remember?

Dr. Carroll: I remember just prior to arriving, the Clutter family had been murdered in Holcomb. Holcomb is just across the hills

from the Pleasant Prairie community and people were very scared. I don't believe you could have bought any padlocks or handguns at the hardware stores. I do remember that being peculiar to the community.

Ardis: I remember Grandma Rose telling about all the locks that were put on the houses at that time in the community. Before that, no one ever thought of locking their doors at night.

Dr. Carroll: That's right.

Ardis: Did you keep the school locked?

Dr. Carroll: No. The school was open all the time.

Ardis: Even at night?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, even at night.

Ardis: No fear of theft?

Dr. Carroll: No. I don't think there was anything there at the school that anyone would have been interested in stealing.

Ardis: I might want to mention that the Pleasant Prairie School is located in Haskell County approximately twenty-one miles northwest of Satanta, which is the nearest town.

Dr. Carroll: And, the teacher's home is less than two hundred feet from the schoolhouse. The teacher would go at the most about twice a month to Garden City to do their shopping. Garden City is about thirty miles from the schoolhouse. I think in the two years that we were there, we were in Ulysses once, Satanta perhaps twice, and Sublette two or three times. Generally, those were always a professional experience when I had a teacher's meeting.

Ardis: Was being a distance from town difficult for you and your family to adapt too?

Dr. Carroll: It may have been, but I don't remember it being hard to adapt to. We got our milk within a few miles and farmers were very generous with their meat products. The community interests were centered around the school and the church. We saw the church being built while we were there.

Ardis: The church being built was another significant event.

Was this before the feedlot was built?

Dr. Carroll: Yes. I believe at that time, the feedlots were basically around Dodge City. I do believe Brookover's were in operation in Garden City, but feedlot operations were rather limited.

Ardis: They have certainly changed the community today.

Dr. Carroll: I would think so.

Ardis: You mentioned that you started a kindergarten when you went to Pleasant Prairie. Was that the first time a kindergarten had been in that school?

Dr. Carroll: Yes.

Ardis: What was the usual age for a child to begin school?

Dr. Carroll: Five. No, first grade, they had to be six. To start kindergarten, five. That was also when you had to be six years old by October.

Ardis: Did many children move in and out of school during

during the year?

Dr. Carroll: No. In fact, there were only three families that would have not been considered children of landowner families. Three families, the two Dietz families and the Hull family, were employed by the gas pumping company and they had six children enrolled in the school.

Ardis: How did most of the students get to school?

Dr. Carroll: Their parents brought them. Leslie's kids walked.

Ardis: In thinking about the students you taught, what type of occupations did most of the students do after they left school? Have you been able to keep track of them?

Dr. Carroll: Well, to some degree. I think most of them that came from farm families returned to the farm. Others, I don't know where they are.

Ardis: Did many of the students attend college?

Dr. Carroll: A few did.

Ardis: Did the students of the Pleasant Prairie School come from a particular heritage of background?

Dr. Carroll: The majority came from a rural background. I don't remember any Catholics, predominately Protestant faith and all Anglo-white. The majority of the parents of the students did not have a college education. Some of the students had an older brother or sister attending college, but probably from the students I taught, probably only four or five, maybe six, went on to college.

Ardis: Are there any "outstanding students" from the school?

Dr. Carroll: If you could tell me what happened to the Courvisier girls, I could answer that question. I would say Elaine and Lee Ann had high potential. Also, Stuart Dietz and Randy Dietz, they were both very outstanding students as I remember.

Ardis: Do you remember what was the cost of education to the student and his family?

Dr. Carroll: No, but it would be very reasonable. As I remember, they were thinking in Kansas of establishing a cost of

about \$250.00 per student. When there is a one-room schoolhouse with one teacher, and a limited number of students, the cost of education per student goes up considerably. However, when you look at the resources that school district had, they were educating those kids on a three to six tenths of a mill and that is not very much, considering most of the school districts had a higher tax base.

Ardis: Were there boundaries of the school district? Were these boundary lines followed or were they lax?

Dr. Carroll: No, there was no laxity in the boundary lines. They were very strict.

Ardis: Was the schoolhouse used for community social activities as well as for education?

Dr. Carroll: No. It was totally educational. The church attracted most of that type of activities.

Ardis: You mentioned earlier the school board members. I know that Leslie Alexander is no longer living. Bill Engler and Cliff Hull now live in Garden City. Were the school

board members elected?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, they were elected.

Ardis: Was the election held at the school?

Dr. Carroll: Yes, they did use the school for elections.

Ardis: Who hired and fired the teacher?

Dr. Carroll: The school board.

Ardis: Did the community have any input into that factor?

Dr. Carroll: I'm sure the community had a lot of input into that situation. Whenever anything goes wrong, usually the school board members are readily approached.

Ardis: Well, that hasn't changed much through the years!

Dr. Carroll: No.

Ardis: Can you remember any controversies surrounding the Pleasant Prairie School?

Dr. Carroll: Well, not as I remember. My predecessor was Catholic, therefore he had no participation in any of the community outside of school. Pleasant Prairie is a very church orientated community. In fact, if you didn't attend the Pleasant Prairie Church of God, chances are you didn't know much about anything that was going on in the community. I happened to come out of a Church of God background, so I fit right in. I think possibly that was a request made indirectly or directly, I don't know, with the school board. Of course, not all the school board members were Church of God denomination. Leslie had a very strong personality and in a lot of respects, I think the attitude of the other two board members may have been "Whatever you think, Leslie". So, when Leslie got his ideas together that he thought I would make a good teacher for them, he proceeded enthusiastically and I think the other school board members monitored that. Leslie farmed there where the school and teacherage was located and being a personal friend, I didn't mind getting my hands dirty. I enjoyed getting out and working in the field and driving implements for his farming operation, might have been a controversy. So, when Leslie hired a schoolteacher, he also hired a hired man, and also brought additional members to the church. There were a lot of politics involved.

Ardis: Do you know whether the land was purchased or given to the school?

Dr. Carroll: Back in those days, there had to be a certain amount of land set aside for schools. There had to be a school within a certain number of miles from each other. I suppose this goes back many, many decades because when our forefathers came out here to set up homesteads, one of the first things they had to set up was the school. But, I do not know anything about that particular piece of land.

Ardis: What was your salary when you first started teaching?

Dr. Carroll: I went up on the salary scale very quickly. I started teaching in 1958, at \$3,100.00 a year. That was an eight month school year.

Ardis: Was that your salary in Rice County?

Dr. Carroll: Yes. My first year at Pleasant Prairie was \$5,600.00. I was almost doubled!

Ardis: Was your salary the same for the second year?

Dr. Carroll: No. They gave me a \$200.00 raise.

Ardis: Did you have a voice in the salary decision?

Dr. Carroll: No. I'm sure it was decided on among the board members. I don't feature myself asking for a raise. I have made a covenant, whether it is a church board or a school board, I will give you all my energy, time, and talents I've got as long as I can afford it. If you want me to do certain things, you know it is going to cost money. If you want me to wear a new suit, new shoes, or drive a new car, I'll live out the life style you set for me.

Ardis: How did you receive your paycheck? Did you get it once a month? Did it come in the mail?

Dr. Carroll: It came once a month and it was delivered by the treasurer or some family member of the treasurer.

Ardis: Who was the treasurer?

Dr. Carroll: Bill Engler was the treasurer.

Ardis: Do you have special memories of your teaching experiences

at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: One experience that stands out in my mind was when the kids built a snowman that had to be at least nine feet tall or maybe ten feet tall. It was huge! And the real chore was putting the hat and coat on the snowman. After we located the coat and hat, we had to get them up there. Milton was the strongest and the largest one of the students and so between he and I, we held up one student and he was able to put those things on. The snowman stood there for days. The kids really took a great deal of pride in that snowman. They worked so hard on it and it was huge!

Ardis: Did you have "snow days" when the weather was bad and school was cancelled?

Dr. Carroll: I'm sure there were days that we had no school, but I don't remember any bad snow storms.

Ardis: Did the school make any lasting contributions to the community?

Dr. Carroll: Oh yes! The two institutions that remain in many of our communities are the schools and the church. The

community doesn't just happen. It has to be developed and it takes years to develop it and its one of those things you can destroy overnight. When a school is taken from a community it shakes the grass roots.

Ardis: Do you know why the school closed?

Dr. Carroll: No, I don't remember the exact details as to why the school closed.

Ardis: Do you recall any comments from the community after the school closed?

Dr. Carroll: Not everybody that lives in Pleasant Prairie community attends the church nor did everybody just automatically go into Satanta to school. Some went to Garden City and some went to Sublette. As I remember, the most common comment was that the people never saw certain families anymore. Maybe they would see their neighbors on the road and wave or perhaps they might see them in town at Dillons shopping. When the school was taken from the Pleasant Prairie Community catalyst, that common bond of their children attending the same school had been broken. I don't know whether the county extension

program, 4-H, and other organizations were able to fill the vacuum that the school served. So, when you take the school out of the community, you check those roots.

Ardis: Do you know what year the school closed?

Dr. Carroll: Yes. I taught there in 1962-63 and so it would have closed at least by 1965. It think it was two years after I left.

Ardis: Who were some of the pupils you taught at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: I remember Lee Ann and Elaine Courvisier, Wanda Jean, Eldon, and Milton Alexander, Linda and Elaine Kells, Terry Engler, the Faulkner children, the Dietz boys, and the Hull children.

Ardis: Do you have any additional memories or thoughts about your years at Pleasant Prairie?

Dr. Carroll: I've often thought how good education could result in spite of all the things in our rural schools. Students learned a lot of independence when it came to study habits. I don't know that I have any real sense of gratifications

Pleasant Prairie students in regards to achievement. But in the Rice County school, many students did go on and significant achievements resulted. But, that school was close to the community of Lyons, in fact, only four miles from Lyons.

Ardis: What was the name of that district?

Dr. Carroll: Union 5. I spent two excellent years at Pleasant Prairie. I had much growing up take place in my own maturity. It was a good place to do it when your nearest neighbor is a half-mile away. You have time to do a lot of thinking. I look at the Pleasant Prairie experience, personally, as my wilderness experience.

Ardis: Dr. Carroll, I have appreciated your time and sharing of your experiences at Pleasant Prairie and your insights into the one-room schoolhouse. Thank you so very much.